AMENDMENTS

In the Claims

The following is a marked-up version of the claims with the language that is underlined ("___") being added and the language that contains strikethrough ("——") being deleted:

1.   (Currently Amended) A ~~method for handling digital messages,~~ initiating an instant messaging (IM) session, the method comprising:

determining whether a sender of a received email message is currently present at an Instant Messaging (IM) account; ~~and~~

determining whether the sender of the received email message is a contact of a recipient of the received email message; and

in response to determining that the sender of the received email message is currently present at ~~an IM account,~~ the IM account and in response to determining that the sender of the received email message is the contact of the recipient of the received email message, automatically launching an IM session with the sender.

2.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether a sender of a received email message is currently present at an IM account includes extracting contact information from the email message, the contact information being associated with the sender of the received email message.

3. – 9. (Canceled)

10.   (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium that includes a program that when executed by a computer performs at least the following:

determining whether a sender of a received email message is currently present at an Instant Messaging (IM) account; ~~and~~

determining whether the sender of the received email message is a contact of a recipient of the received email message; and

in response to determining that the sender of the received email message is currently present at ~~an IM account,~~ the IM account and in response to determining that the sender of the received email message is the contact of the recipient of the received email message, automatically launching an IM session with the sender.

11.   (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 10, the program further extracting contact information from the email message, the contact information being associated with the sender of the received email message.

12. – 17.   (Canceled)

18.　(Currently Amended) A system for ~~handling digital messages,~~ initiating an instant messaging (IM) session, the system comprising:

means for determining whether a sender of a received email message is currently present at an Instant Messaging (IM) account; ~~and~~

　　means for determining whether the sender of the received email message is a contact of a recipient of the received email message; and

means for, in response to determining that the sender of the received email message is currently present at ~~an IM account,~~ the IM account and in response to determining that the sender of the received email message is the contact of the recipient of the received email message, automatically launching an IM session with the sender.

19.　(Currently Amended) A system for ~~handling digital messages,~~ initiating an instant messaging (IM) session, the system comprising:

a memory that stores at least the following:

　　condition-determination logic that determines whether a sender of a received email message is currently present at an Instant Messaging (IM) account; ~~and~~

　　contact determining logic that determines whether the sender of the received email message is a contact of a recipient of the received email message; and

　　launch logic that, in response to determining that the sender of the email message is currently present at ~~an IM account,~~ the IM account and in response to determining that the sender of the received email message is the contact of the recipient of the received email message, automatically launches an IM session with the sender.

20.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 19, further comprising information-extraction logic that extracts contact information from the email message, the contact information being associated with a sender of the email message.

21. – 24.   (Canceled)

25.   (Currently Amended) A system for ~~handling digital messages,~~ initiating an instant messaging (IM) session, the system comprising:

a memory that stores at least the following:

condition-determination logic that determines whether a sender of a received digital message is currently present at an Instant Messaging (IM) account;

contact determining logic that determines whether the sender of the received email message is a contact of a recipient of the received email message; and

launch logic that, in response to determining that the sender of the received digital message is currently present at ~~an IM account,~~ the IM account and in response to determining that the sender of the received email message is the contact of the recipient of the received email message, automatically launches an IM session with the sender.

26.   (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium for ~~handling digital messages,~~ initiating an instant messaging (IM) session, the computer-readable medium including a program that when executed by a computer performs at least the following:

determining whether a sender of a received email message is currently present at an Instant Messaging (IM) account; and

in response to determining that the sender of the email message is currently present at ~~an~~ the IM account, automatically, without user input, launching an IM session with the sender.

27.   (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 26, the program further extracting contact information from the email message, the contact information being associated with a sender of the email message.